

Testimony in Support of H.B. 5823: An Act Implementing a State-wide Coordinated Two-Generation Model

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Human Services Committee

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Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, and Distinguished Members of the Human Services Committee,

I am testifying today on behalf of Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based public education and advocacy organization that works statewide to promote the well-being of Connecticut's children, youth, and families.

Connecticut Voices for Children Supports H.B. 5823: An Act Implementing a State-wide Coordinated Two-Generation Model. The bill requires Commissioner of Social Services "to create pilot two-generational model programs that promote long-term economic success for low-income families."¹ Research shows that two-generational plans, "which focus on creating opportunities for and meeting the needs of vulnerable children and their parents together, *move the whole family toward educational success and economic security.*"²

A two-generational plan takes into account the fact that **children do well when families do well**. The proposed plan includes providing the parents of children living in poverty with the opportunity to acquire technical skills to increase their employability and sustainable employment, developing targeted sector and workforce training and education, and promoting cross-sector professional development. Last year, **more than a quarter (29% or 10,525) of the Connecticut women who gave birth had a high school education or less.**³ A high school education – if not a college education – is a necessity for economic stability in Connecticut. Higher levels of education reduce the risk of unemployment. In 2013, unemployment in Connecticut for those with less than a high school degree was 22%, while unemployment for those with a high school degree was 10% and unemployment for those with a bachelor's degree or higher was 4%.⁴ Similarly, the well-educated in Connecticut earn significantly more than those without a high school degree, or those with only a high school degree.⁵ **A parent's level of educational attainment has a strong correlation with children's economic and education outcomes.**⁶ To this end, a two-generational plan should help implement crucial educational and workforce supports to increase economic opportunity for low-income families.

¹ See Raised Bill No. 5832 "An Act Implementing a State-wide Coordinated Two-Generation Model," Connecticut General Assembly (February 2015), available at: <http://cga.ct.gov/2015/TOB/H/2015HB-05823-R00-HB.htm>.

² Joan Lombardi, Anne Mosle, Nisha Patel, Rachel Schumacher, and Jennifer Stedron "Gateways to Two Generations: The Potential for Early Childhood Programs and Partnerships to Support Children and Parents Together," Ascend: The Aspen Institute, (January 2014), available at: http://s.bsd.net/ascend/default/page/file/d3336cff8a154af047_07m6btuk2.pdf.

³ U.S. Census Bureau. 2013 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table B13014: Women 15 to 50 Years Who Had a Birth in the Past 12 Months by Marital Status and Educational Attainment.

⁴ Nicholas Defiesta and Wade Gibson, "The State of Working Connecticut 2014," Connecticut Voices for Children, (September 2014), available at <http://www.ctvoices.org/sites/default/files/econ14workinget.pdf>.

⁵ Connecticut Voices for Children and Economic Policy Institute analysis of U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey (CPS) data in 2012. For more, see Edie Joseph and Orlando Rodriguez, "The State of Working Connecticut 2013: Young People in the Workforce," Connecticut Voices for Children, (August 2013), available at: <http://www.ctvoices.org/sites/default/files/econ13sowctfull.pdf>.

⁶ Tom Hertz, "Understanding Mobility in America," Center for American Progress, (April 2006), available at: http://www.americanprogress.org/kf/hertz_mobility_analysis.pdf.

In addition, many children face barriers to success based on family instability, family income, race, and ethnicity. Thus it is crucial that a two-generational plan aimed at promoting long-term family economic success take age, socioeconomic, and racial/ethnic disparities in the workforce into account.

Even though Connecticut's population has grown, the job market has barely added more jobs in comparison to 25 years ago. While the nation has made strides in recovering from the jobs lost in the 2008 Recession, Connecticut has lagged behind, and still needs to add around 20,000 jobs to recover completely. Connecticut's stagnant economy has harmed some workers more than others: **workers between the ages 16-24 face twice the unemployment rate as their older counterparts.** Many young workers have delayed entering the workforce, or simply cannot find work.

Moreover, in 2013 **Black and Hispanic workers faced twice the unemployment rate of white workers,** and have been the slowest to recover jobs.⁷ The racial pay gap that existed over a decade ago also continues today: **white workers earn about 50% more than Black and Hispanic workers.**⁸

Now is the time to invest in low-income families through the implementation of a two-generation model. Connecticut's economic disparities by race are aggravated by our state's shifting demographic makeup. In 2013, 46% of 3- and 4-year olds were children of color, up from 31% in 2000.⁹ **These children are our future workforce, parents, and voters.** To address our state's demographic shift, it is crucial to recognize that **child poverty is concentrated among Connecticut's children of color.**¹⁰ Poverty hinders children's educational achievement and development into productive workers and supportive parents. A two-generational plan takes steps toward addressing socioeconomic and racial/ethnic inequity for children and their families.

By "foster[ing] intergenerational success for low-income families,"¹¹ the state can move closer to ensuring that Connecticut's young children and struggling families have a brighter future.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

⁷ Nicholas Defiesta and Wade Gibson, "The State of Working Connecticut 2014," Connecticut Voices for Children, (September 2014), available at <http://www.ctvoices.org/sites/default/files/econ14workinget.pdf>.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 Annual State Resident Population Estimates for 6 Race Groups (5 Race Alone Groups and Two or More Races) by Age, Sex, and Hispanic Origin: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2013, available at <http://www.census.gov/popest/data/state/asch/2013/index.html>.

¹⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 American Community Survey 1 Year Estimates. Table B17001: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months by Sex by Age.

¹¹ See Raised Bill No. 5832 "An Act Implementing a State-wide Coordinated Two-Generation Model," Connecticut General Assembly (February 2015), available at: <http://cga.ct.gov/2015/TOB/H/2015HB-05823-R00-HB.htm>.